Royal York Football Club (RYFC) Injury Prevention, Assessment, Treatment, and Return-to-Play Protocols

1. Purpose

Royal York Football Club (RYFC) is committed to ensuring the safety, well-being, and long-term development of all players. These protocols outline the club's approach to injury prevention, on-field assessment, treatment, and safe return-to-play, consistent with recognized medical and sport-specific standards.

2. Injury Prevention

2.1 Warm-Up and Cool-Down

- All RYFC training sessions and games must include structured warm-ups and cool-downs.
- Warm-ups will include mobility, dynamic stretching, and activation drills
- Cool-downs will focus on flexibility, light aerobic activity, and recovery exercises.

2.2 Load Management

- Coaches must monitor player workload to prevent overtraining and fatigue-related injuries.

2.3 Equipment and Environment

- Coaches must ensure playing surfaces are safe and appropriate for the session (e.g., dry, free of debris).
- Players must wear appropriate footwear, shin guards, and RYFC-approved gear.
- Goalposts must be anchored and equipment checked regularly.

2.4 Education

- Annual injury-prevention workshops will be provided to coaches and players.
- Coaches are encouraged to incorporate injury-prevention exercises into weekly programming.

3. Injury Assessment

3.1 On-Field Assessment

- If a player is injured, play will stop immediately.
- The coach or designated first-aid responder will assess the player's condition.
- Coaches must follow the "**Stop – Look – Listen – Decide**" method:
    - **Stop**: Stop the play immediately.
    - **Look**: Observe the mechanism of injury.
    - **Listen**: Ask the player what happened and where it hurts.
    - **Decide**: Determine if the player can safely continue or must be removed.

3.2 Concussion Protocol

- Any player suspected of having a concussion must be removed immediately from play and not return that day.
- "When in doubt, sit them out."
- The coach must notify the parent/guardian and inform Technical Director
- Players may only return to training or games with written clearance from a licensed healthcare professional.

3.3 Serious Injuries

- If an injury appears severe (e.g., head, neck, fracture, major joint, loss of consciousness), call emergency services (911) immediately.
- Do not move the player until trained medical personnel arrive unless the environment poses additional danger.

4. Injury Treatment and Follow-Up

4.1 Immediate Care

- First-aid kits must be present at all RYFC sessions and games.
- Basic first aid (ice, compression, elevation, immobilization) will be applied when appropriate.
- Coaches are not permitted to diagnose or prescribe treatment beyond their certification.

4.2 Documentation

- All injuries requiring removal from play must be reported via to the Technical Directed within 24 hours.
- Copies are submitted to the Club Director and the Director of Football.

4.3 Communication

- Coaches will communicate injury details to parents/guardians as soon as possible.
- If a medical follow-up is recommended, the player will not resume activities until cleared by a healthcare professional.

5. Return-to-Play Protocol

5.1 Medical Clearance

- Players recovering from moderate to serious injuries (including all concussions) must provide a written medical clearance note from a physician or physiotherapist before returning to any activity.

5.2 Gradual Return Process

- Once cleared, the following stages must be followed under coach supervision:
    1. **Stage 1 – Light Aerobic Exercise** (walking, light jogging; no ball work).
    2. **Stage 2 – Sport-Specific Drills** (low-intensity technical exercises, no contact).
    3. **Stage 3 – Non-Contact Training** (passing, shooting, agility; increased intensity).
    4. **Stage 4 – Controlled Scrimmage** (small-sided games, monitored contact).
    5. **Stage 5 – Full Return** (resume full training and games).

5.3 Monitoring and Feedback

- Coaches will monitor player responses at each stage and communicate with parents and medical professionals if concerns arise.
- If symptoms reappear, the player must return to the previous stage or seek re-evaluation.

6. Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Coaches	Ensure warm-ups/cool-downs, assess minor injuries, report incidents, follow return-to-play process
Technical Director	Ensure staff compliance with safety protocols, review injury reports
Club Director	Maintain injury records, ensure medical clearance policies are enforced
Parents/Guardians	Monitor recovery, communicate with club and healthcare providers
Players	Report injuries honestly and follow recovery plans

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7. Review and Updates

These protocols will be reviewed annually by the Technical Director, Club Drector and Director of Football to ensure alignment with the latest Ontario Soccer and Canada Soccer safety standards.